

Rhythm of the Revolt and Solidarity

“Meaning depends on the movement of meaning.”¹

The paper explores the conception of rhythm as a vehicle of subjectivization and specifically of inter-subjectivization, distribution of space and time in a community, so the link between power, freedom and rhythm and also the meaning of rhythm as a tool of resistance and creativity. In view of the various connotations of the word, “rhythm” implies a play of determinacy and indeterminacy or of “law” and “freedom.” In this exploration, I choose to focus on the collective political action which generates aesthetic experience moving from silence to sound, from invisible to visible.

The Rhythm as *Rhuthmos*

It is only with Plato, Aristotle and Aristoxenes that *rhythm* came to mean “a succession of strong and weak beats organized according to a numerical order, or the regular occurrence in time or space of a foregrounded event.”² Emile Benveniste describes Plato’s contribution to the understanding of the term “rhythm” as order or harmony:

“His innovation was in applying it [rhuthmos] to the form of movement which the human body makes in dancing and the arrangement of figures into which this movement is resolved. The decisive circumstance is there, in the notion of a corporal rhuthmos associated with metron and bound by the law of numbers: this “form” is from then on determined by a “measure” and numerically regulated. Here is the new sense of rhuthmos: in Plato, “arrangement” (the original sense of the word) is constituted by an ordered sequence of slow and rapid movements, just as “harmony” results from the alternation of high and low. And it is the order in movement, the entire process of the harmonious arrangement of bodily movements combined with meter, which has since been called ‘rhythm.’ We may then speak of the ‘rhythm’ of a dance, of a step, of a song, of a speech, of work, of everything which presupposes a continuous activity broken by meter into alternating intervals.”³

But if we go back to the Presocratics, we then find a concept that can serve us today to understand the political potential of the rhythm. In order to re-think the rhythm, Emile Benveniste proposes a new look at the etymology of rhythm as derived from “rheo” “rhein” “to flow”. According to Benveniste, the word *rhuthmos* was used in Presocratic Ancient Greece to mean “a form of something moving” or “a way of flowing.” The verb “rhein” could not refer to the regular, periodic, metric motions. But includes the sense of flux, movement, mobility, flexibility.

¹Henri Meschonnic, *Ethics and Politics of Translating*, p.64, 69, 120, 136, 141, Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2011.

² Pascal Michon, *Discipline, Control or Rhythm?, Rhuthmos*, 19 mars 2015. <http://rhuthmos.eu/spip.php?article1510>

³ Emile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, p.287, University of Miami Press, 1971.

“*Rhuthmos*, according to the contexts in which it is given, designates the form in the instant that it is assumed by what is moving, mobile and fluid, the form of that which does not have an organic consistency; it fits the pattern of a fluid element, of a letter arbitrarily shaped, or a robe which one arranges at one’s will, of a particular state of character or mood. It is the form as improvised, momentary, changeable.... Thus *rhuthmos*, meaning literally ‘the particular manner of flowing’, describes ‘dispositions’ or ‘configurations’ without fixity or natural necessity and arising from an arrangement which is always subject to change.”⁴

Thus the rhythm as *Rhuthmos* in this Presocratic meaning is in a tension with the fixed arrangements and constant measures, is the potentiality rather than the determinacy.

Configuration of the perceptions of space and time

The rhythm it is neither understood as a “particular” rhythm nor as a category of form but as a basic condition of both the reception and the production of art and also of the community. “Rhythm is not only a sequence of signs or units in time, but the sequence of actions themselves generating them. The structure of the perceptions as a whole.”⁵ So *Rhuthmos* can refer to a special configuration of the perceptions of space and time, thus subjectivization and inter-subjectivization in community.

In this perspective, the human character, disposition, mood and sensible richness in any moment are all characterized by *Rhuthmos* as is the present form of a continuation or the formation. Individuals and their identities are always in perpetual becoming. But, at the same time, those individuals are seen through their singular or collective aspect in some fixed and even naturalized forms produced by techniques that seek to give form to their “flows” to their bodies. First of all, one can think about the fictive production of the “citizen” as a part of the community or the “police.” In fact, the first modern link between rhythm and inter-subjectivization, rhythm and politics is constructed by Plato. Plato’s notion that a regulated beat in music will shape the citizenry in regulated ways. This idea is visible in Rousseau (citizenship and festival) Schiller (aesthetic state and aesthetic education of citizens) and even in Goebbels who explore the harmony of the ideal society in the rhythm for intensifying or dispelling emotions, to configurate time, space, and action.⁶ According to Jacques Rancière, when the Futurists or the Constructivists declared the end of art and the identification of its practices with the practices that construct, decorate, or give a certain rhythm to the times and spaces of communal life, they proposed an end of art equivalent to the identification of art with

4 Benveniste, 1971, pp.285 - 286.

5¹ <https://rhythmsection.de/uber-uns-about/>

6 Hans Traub, *Der Film als politisches Machtmittel*, Munich, 1932, page 29. Original German text: "Ohne Zweifel ist der Film als Sprache ein vortreffliches Mittel der Propaganda. Die Beeinflussung fordert von jeher solche Spracharten, die in der einfachen Erzählung einprägsame und bewegte Handlung gestalten. ... Aus dem weiten Gebiet der Sprache aber, die unmittelbar durch technische und wirtschaftliche Vorgänge an den Empfänger herangetragen wird, ist die wirksamste Art das Laufbild. Es verlangt eine ständige Aufmerksamkeit; es ist voller Überraschungen im Wechsel von Handlung, Zeit und Raum; es ist unausdenkbar reich im Rhythmus der Gefühlssteigerung und der Gefühlsverdrängung."

the life of the community. This proposal is directly dependent on the Schillerian and Romantic reinterpretation of Greek art as a community's mode of life.⁷

But in the same time "rhythm" is an essential part of the "emancipator aesthetic experience" in arts and in political action which is characterized by dynamic becoming rather than static being, by novelty rather than return of the same, and by the indeterminacy of the future as potentiality rather than the determinacy of a fixed arrangement.⁸ So "rhythm" implies a dialectical relation between determinacy and indeterminacy, or "law" and "freedom." We can resume in two different conceptions: Hölderlin's notion that "rhythm is the normality of the subject, and the caesura is the revelatory moment", and Nietzsche's insistence that rhythm/music is the Dionysiac, which "affords a break in the subjectivity of thought"⁹ This is the obscure or dialectical face of the rhythm.

Power, politics and the rhythm

I propose the way of Amittai Aviram who points in "The Meaning of Rhythm" to the fact that "rhythm may provide us with an opportunity newly to understand the relation between language and the body."¹⁰ This relation can be a tool of domination or also the redemption in a defined the time and space. "Rhythm intersubjectivizes, in the sense of creating/channeling/interrupting/transforming subjectivities."¹¹ The rhythm analyses can provide us the possibility to understanding the new forms of exercising power and domination, subjectivization and also the resistance on the fluid world in which we have entered.

As announced by Roland Barthes in his first lectures at the Collège de France : « There is a consubstantial link between power and rhythm. What power foremost imposes is rhythm (of all things : life, time, thought, speech). »¹² The process of individuation at the various levels of body, language and social groups, identities, the life forms, the space (public spaces, gated communities, public accommodations, nature vs. city, public transportation...) and the time (hours of work and rest, retirement age, the period of childhood) are produced by a rhythm.

"Rhythm lies at the heart of our experience of shifting dynamics ruling neo-liberal society in terms of life patterns, economic growth and decay, and our systems of mediation and communication. Our lives are shaped and partake of rhythmical fluctuations : the regular happening of events and its sudden variations, the negotiations between different degrees of speeds, as in the way we produce and consume food, think

⁷ Jacques Rancière, *Le Partage du sensible : Esthétique et politique*, p.26-46, La fabrique, Paris, 2000.

⁸ Christopher F.Hasty, *Meter as Rhythm*, p.14, 1997, Oxford University Press.

⁹ Amittai Aviram, *The meaning of rhythm. In Massimo Verdicchio and Robert Burch (Eds.), Between philosophy and poetry: Writing, rhythm, history*, p.163, 2002, New York: Continuum.

¹⁰ Douglas Robinson, *Rhythm as knowledge-translation, knowledge as rhythm-translation*, p.75-94, Global Media Journal -Canadian Edition, Volume 5, Issue 1, 2012.

¹¹ http://www.gmj.uottawa.ca/1201/v5i1_robinson.pdf

¹² Pascal Michon, *Discipline, Control or Rhythm ?*, *Rhuthmos*, 19 mars 2015 [en ligne]. <http://rhuthmos.eu/spip.php?article1510>. Roland Barthes, *Comment vivre ensemble ? Sur l' idiorrythmie*, Cours au Collège de France - janvier-mai 1977.

and practice art and the balance and alternation between our moods, affects, and desires. Rhythm is nevertheless difficult to grasp, point down, describe. It is more something we feel, sense and intuit.¹³”

Jacques Rancière’s well-known notion 'the distribution of the sensible' is helpful to deal with this difficulty and clarify the connections between intersubjectivization, the body and the rhythm. According to French Philosopher we are living in a so-called “consensus” system. This is what Rancière calls a 'police order'. It is a set of implicit rules and conventions which determine the distribution of roles in a community and the abilities and the talents which operate within it. This order is founded on what Rancière calls the 'distribution of the sensible'. By it, he is referring to a determined regime of the perceptible in which roles and modes of participation in a common social world are determined. *The distribution of the sensible* sets the divisions between what is visible and invisible, sayable and unsayable, audible and inaudible.¹⁴ Thus, one can say that the social order is not founded on the forms but on the rhythm of the perceptions. The structure of the perceptions is based on the *distribution of the sensible*. So, the inequality in the social order is before representations, identities, categories, vocabularies, language and logos.¹⁵

“The distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed. Having a particular ‘occupation’ thereby determines the ability or inability to take charge of what is common to the community; it defines what is visible or not in a common space, endowed with a common language, etc.”¹⁶

According to Rancière “politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time.”¹⁷ The ‘aesthetics’ is at the core of politics and it can be understood as the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience.¹⁸ *Politics as experience* is the reconfiguration of the distribution of the sensible. Thus as reconfiguration of the rhythm of 'police order.' Political action is also an aesthetic experience which occurs because, or when, the social order is interrupted by a freedom that bodies “performs.” Politics occurs because when the sense of space and time suspends. This is also the suspension of the fixed representations and metric forms. Politics in this aesthetic way, open space for creative improvisation of a new subjectivities.

¹³Pascal Michon_, *Discipline, Control or Rhythm ?*, *Rhuthmos*, 19 mars 2015 [en ligne]. <http://rhuthmos.eu/spip.php?article1510>.

¹⁴Jacques Rancière, *Le Partage du sensible : Esthétique et politique*, La fabrique, Paris, 2000.

¹⁵To clarify for instance, the metrics of specialization and repetitive tasks in metric Taylorism had a significant impact on the human body and his sensible capacities, and thus on the subjectivization and intersubjectivization in the modern society.

¹⁶Jacques Rancière, *Le Partage du sensible: Esthétique et politique*, p.12, La fabrique, Paris, 2000.

¹⁷Rancière (2000), p.14.

¹⁸Rancière (2000), p.14.

Gezi Manifestations and the Rhythm of Solidarity

Now we can try to explore the rhythm in this subjectivization process as an experience of flux between silence and sound, invisible and visible. This rhythm was at the core of the artistic spirit of the Gezi-Park movement between 27 May 15 and Jun 2013 in Istanbul.

The government was planning to turn Gezi Park into a shopping mall. Ignoring ethnic backgrounds, ideological differences and economical distinctions, people protested in “concert” and created a common rhythm to take back the one and only green area in the center of the city; indeed to take back their right to the city and to the common and personal life. It was one of the biggest uprisings in Turkey against authoritarianism, land expropriation, for women rights and freedom of speech. The number turned quickly into millions resisting against the violence of the police. The occupation of the Gezi Park was in the center of the movements all over the country for more than two weeks. The protesters (called themselves *Çapulcu* (looters), reappropriating Erdoğan's insult for themselves and coined the derivative "chapulling", given the meaning of "fighting for your rights") created a new way of coexistence in the occupation.

All kind of occupation is also the spatialization of rhythm. During the movement, the rhythm of the “life in the protests” shaped the types, levels and layers of the voices; the type, speed and direction of the body gestures and movements, the perception of time and the distances in the city. The revolt narratives could easily be transformed metaphorically into pseudo-philosophical values. Nonetheless Gezi can be understood unless when you feel this rhythm. Thus as Douglas Robinson says “rhythm is a knowledge-translation, knowledge is a rhythm-translation.”¹⁹ It was the rhythm (in the sense of *Rhythmos*) of the sensible atmosphere of a new intersubjectivity, in the flow of life for a short time. The protesters shared the rhythm of the flowing feelings and aspirations between fear, hope, passion, rage, love, courage, curiosity, pain... this rhythm created a concrete bodily experience. They called it as “solidarity”. Solidarity is not a feeling. It is the rhythm of flux, oscillation (continuum) between natural world and human world, between the community and the individuality, existence and coexistence.

Breaking thought the unequal distribution of the speech and noise

If your voice is not heard or it 's heard just as a noise in the distribution of the perception of a social order, you need to find a new way of action. In this condition to make voice is a political action which makes you a subject. Henri Meschonnic says that the subject makes itself in and through its voice. And the voice is passing from subject to subject.²⁰ That 's why “pot banging” is a serious aesthetical and political action.

Some started by a spoon and a tea glass, some were more bold turning cauldrons into drums. During the Gezi Protests *Sound of Pots and Pans* was everywhere. This disorganized orchestra was playing for deaf politicians and especially for a deaf prime minister. Every kitchen utensil can be turned into an instrument of music. The sound of pots went on for days and nights, echoing up and down streets and squares for hours. *Sound of Pots and Pans* seem to be

¹⁹Douglas Robinson, *Rhythm is a knowledge-translation, knowledge is a rhythm-translation*, pp. 75-94, Global Media Journal, Canadian Edition, Volume 5, Issue 1, 2012. http://www.gmj.uottawa.ca/1201/v5i1_robinson.pdf

²⁰Henri Meschonnic, *Ethics and politics of translating*. p.136, Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2011.

especially the voice of housewives and mothers. The drumming with cauldrons might well be the reconfigurations of the distribution of the sensible. The woman closed to the private space distant from the public sphere, so excluded from “the theater of modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk.”²¹ Their ability wasn’t to talk but to listen, to stay at home, to cook, to take care of children and to “keep clean the intimacy” of the family. During Gezi Protestations the prime ministers ordered mothers to take care of their children and take them back home. Mothers didn’t follow his commands and they reached out to their children. The majority of them were in the square at once. They were with their kitchen utensil but not for cooking. The “noise pollution” according to the prime minister was the music of freedom for some other ears. The bodily performance of *making* voice gives birth to the new subjects. The occupation of the “improper” space and time disturbs the distribution of the roles, abilities and talents. The new subject (here the mothers) perceives, interprets, negotiates and constitutes. The flow of action opens her to the fragile encounters. This new way of (political) action is shaped by the rhythm of oscillation (but not as similar to the a pendulum) between speech and noise, visible and invisible, private and the public, pure and impure. When there is the violence in the case, the oscillation could be also between nature and culture, life and death.

It means, that in to this rhythm one can put oneself in the position or, better, in the activity of an operator, who knows how to displace, assemble, combine, fit together; in a word, who knows how to structure (very different from the classic sense). Just as the reading of the modern text consists not in receiving but in writing it anew, with a fresh inscription, to be in this rhythm is to operate it, to draw it into an unknown praxis.²²

It's not the first time pots and pans have been used to express discontent in Turkey. But this time, the sound has inspired musicians.²³ Indeed music has played a major role in the Gezi Park protest.²⁴ Nonetheless the characteristic rhythm was operated in another field, in the actions of the fan of a football team.

ÇARŞI, anti-everything: Rhythmic against metric

Is soccer always the “opium of the people” ? It wasn’t the case in İstanbul. One of the biggest soccer team Beşiktaş’ s fans *Çarşı*, well known for their ‘high level of political

²¹ Nancy Fraser, *Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy*, 25 (26): 56 - 80, *Social Text*, Duke University Press, 1990.

²² This paragraph is a rereading of what Roland Barthes says about Beethoven’s music in *Musica Practica*: “This is not to say that one has to sit with a Beethoven score and get from it an inner recital (which would still remain dependent on the old animistic fantasy); it means that with respect to this music one must put oneself in the position or, better, in the activity of an operator, who knows how to displace, assemble, combine, fit together; in a word (if it is not too worn out), who knows how to structure (very different from constructing or reconstructing in the classic sense). Just as the reading of the modern text (such at least as it may be postulated) consists not in receiving, in knowing or in feeling that text, but in writing it anew, in crossing its writing with a fresh inscription, so too reading this Beethoven is to operate his music, to draw it (it is willing to be drawn) into an unknown praxis.” Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text, Essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath*, p.153., FontanaPress, London, 1977. <https://rosswolfe.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/roland-barthes-image-music-text.pdf>

²³ Kardeş Türküler (Songs of Fraternity) Tencere Tava Havası (Sound of Pots and Pans) "Enough with the headstrong decrees and commands. We're really fed up!" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-kbuS-anD4>. Direnişin Ritimleri İstanbul (Rhythms of Resistance İstanbul) “Buum-Buum TAK; Buum-Bumm Tak, Everybody Trans now!, BumTA Bum Bum Ta; Bum TA Bum Bum TA” <http://direnisinritimleri.blogspot.com.tr/>

²⁴ “The experiential quality of the rhythm and music during a manifestation offering us the prospect of not living in one world, but of sharing many worlds.” Diane Romm, *International Sociology Review of Books* Vol. 25 No. 2 <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0268580909358163>

sensibility' and their opposition to the government, was one of the more influential organization involved in the Gezi protests.²⁵ The group's famous motto is 'Çarşı, anti-everything.' It was their game: The bodily and collective action linked to the complex strategies and tactics, to adopt and control the space and time. One can point out the new proportional timing in their slogans, in the protest marches and in the physical confrontations; the strength of their endless (continuum) voice well trained in every week's practice; the choreography of their collective movement in their neighborhood.²⁶ It was a new kind of rhythm emerged from the changing strength. We have also to speak also about Çarşı's famous sarcastic language.²⁷ The irony was the cause and also the consequence of the new rhythm used in the protests, and a strategic tool to impose their rhythm of the game on the opponent. At the end this language engendered İstanbul United, so united the supporters of Galatasaray, Fenerbahçe and Beşiktaş, life-long rivals.

When Çarşı moves with the rhythm of Spartan warriors, with a percussion section made-up of trash lids used as shield and suddenly began to run shouting "this is Sparta!" the police had nothing to do. It wasn't a coincidence. The Spartans were legendary for their intense physical and mental stamina, and absolute dedication to the defense of their land. It was an oscillation in the history, fear and fun.

Çarşı was uniting body movements, language and voice. Therefore, the rhythm was "audible" and also "visible." But the succession of raisings and lowerings should not be understood in as a regular beat. In some moments of the revolt the rhythm was obviously *rhuthmos*, a way of flowing.²⁸ As classical rhythm defined by Nietzsche, this rhythm is ordered according to duration and proportion rather than succession and pitch or volume. The rhythm was composed of irregular and asymmetrical temporal elements of various durations, modeled on the stamina of the bodies. So the hesitations, accelerations and stagnations of the flow were crucial. Now this the time to mention to the "standing man" as a lock in the flow.

The "Standing Man" as the braid of rhythms

Is the rhythm always moving? The rhythm of music or painting also bring about a stillness as well. "Rhythm allows us to move with great energy but to remain still and serene all the while."²⁹ As well as the kitchenware-protests and Çarşı's visible-audible movement, the iconic "still standing of man" of the Taksim-Square engendered the *rhuthmos* this time by silence.

²⁵ 35 members, including the group's founder, were taken to court where they were accused of attempting to stage a political coup, domestic terrorism, resisting authority, and participation in illegal demonstrations. In the formal accusation brought against Çarşı, it was explained that the group attempted to occupy the office of the former Prime Minister, now President of Turkey. A formal document also states that the group stole an excavator in order to attack police cars near to where tear gas and water cannons were being used against the protesters.

²⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QN_9eHDaev4

²⁷ One can consider that the rhythmic deformation of language effects the development of thought and expression of emotions. <http://rhuthmos.eu/spip.php?article1892>

²⁸ Pascal Michon, *9. Rhythm from Art to Philosophy - Nietzsche (1867-1888) - part 5*, *Rhuthmos*, 1 June 2016 [en ligne]. <http://rhuthmos.eu/spip.php?article1892>

²⁹ Amittai Aviram, *The meaning of rhythm*, s.168, In Massimo Verdicchio and Robert Burch (Eds.), *Between philosophy and poetry: Writing, rhythm, history*, New York: Continuum, 2002.

The "Standing Man" Erdem Gündüz is a Turkish dancer, actor, performance artist starts his silent protest in a hopeless and tired evening. He began to stand still in Taksim Square at 6pm, until 2am. It was a silent, stubborn and dignified protest against the brutality of the police response to demonstrators. John Cage of Gezi "The Standing Man" has become the face of the protest and internationally known. The rhythm of the solidarity can be performed by a "chorus" or just by one person. Soon similar protests consisting of simply stopping and standing spread everywhere in Turkey. Mallarmé would quite possibly say that "the Standing Man" was "a braid of rhythms."

"Every soul is a braid of rhythms [*toute âme est un nœud rythmique*]"³⁰

Taksim Commune and the rhythm of a mountain stream

Kristin Ross explores the imaginary and the practices of the Paris Commune. Ross borrows a metaphor from one of the best known of the Communards, Elisée Reclus. "The Commune, we might say, is perhaps best figured as having the qualities Reclus attributes in his book to the mountain stream. Its scale and geography are livable, not sublime. The stream, in his view, was superior to the river because of the unpredictability of its course. The river's torrents of water barrel down a deep furrow pre-carved by the thousands of gallons that have preceded it; the stream, on the other hand, makes its own way. But for that very reason, the relative strength of the waters of any mountain brook is proportionately greater than that of the Amazon."

This ephemeral, fragile, fluid, unpredictable, livable organization of space and time so called Taksim Commune changed speed from soft and slow to loud and fast. The rhythm of Gezi skipped from white to black, from from silence to sound, from solidarity to revolt. At the end the commune recognition of the *rhythm of Gezi* was experimented as an art work.

³⁰ Stéphane Mallarmé, *La Musique et les Lettres*, p. 644, or "toute âme est une mélodie, qu'il s'agit de renouer" (« Crise de vers », p. 363). *Music and Letters*, 1894, p. 33, trans. Mary Ann Caws, 2001.